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FROM THE BOOKS
IN THE HOMESTEAD OF

Sarah Orne Jewett
AT SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE



BEQUEATHED BY

Theodore Jewett Eastman

A.B. 1901 - M.D. 1905

1931

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Jan 6th*

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE NORTH CHURCH

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE

RE-OPENING AND DEDICATION

OF THE

NORTH CHURCH IN PORTSMOUTH,

JAN. 31, 1838.

BY EDWIN HOLT.

PORTSMOUTH.

PUBLISHED BY C. W. BREWSTER.

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THE BEQUEST OF
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DISCOURSE.

HAGGAI, II: 3.

WHO IS LEFT AMONG YOU THAT SAW THIS HOUSE IN HER FIRST GLORY?

WE assemble to-day for the first time, in this audience-chamber, prepared for the worship of Almighty God. Nor can we proceed to apply the structure to its destined use without the solemnity of a formal dedication. It is the pertinent inquiry of the "judicious Hooker,"—"Can we judge it a thing seemly for any man to go about the building of an house to the God of Heaven with no other appearance than if his end were, to rear up a kitchen or parlor for his own use? Or, when a work of such nature is finished, remaineth there nothing but presently to use it, and so an end?"

Though we do not deem it necessary to consecrate our houses of worship in the mode which Hooker would have deemed the only correct mode, we agree with him, that nothing is more suitable than a formal dedication, when a sanctuary has been prepared for divine worship.

We have accordingly assembled to-day to consecrate the interior of this building to the God of Heaven. Our solemnities shall be simple. Shall they be for this reason, the less acceptable to the Lord? Will He who seeth not as man seeth, receive our offering the more readily, if it be accompanied with imposing rites and gorgeous ceremonies? May we expect more confidently the indwelling presence of the Holy One in this temple,

if we cast a stigma upon other denominations of christians by proclaiming ours the only true church, and our mode of consecration, the only true mode? We shall claim no exclusive right, for our sect or our ceremonies, to the favor of heaven. We shall be satisfied with plain and unimposing solemnities; believing that if we sincerely desire to honor God, and that if our denomination may claim to be an acknowledged part of the general church, our service will not be rejected, though it be unpretending in its character, and though it be worthy, only by its simplicity, of His notice, who filleth immensity with his presence.

We are about to dedicate a remodeled edifice to the worship of the Almighty. One hundred and twenty-five years ago this spot was consecrated to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Some vestiges of the original house of worship now remain. It was the inquiry of the prophet, when the Temple of Solomon was re-built,—“Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?” Who is left among us that saw the first glory of the venerable structure that was here raised by a former generation? Who that is now living, witnessed the satisfaction, with which the then new sanctuary was devoted, in its primitive glory, to the service of Jchovah? Its walls have been remodeled. Its original beauty, defaced and antiquated by the changes of time and fashion, has passed away. The occasion naturally calls upon us to look back and trace the occurrences which our parochial history presents to the reflecting mind.

Let me then invite your attention to a brief *historical sketch of this parish.*

The early history of this congregation is involved in some obscurity. It is not known when our form of worship was first established in Portsmouth. Old records mention the names of several ministers who preached in succession, without having been ordained to the charge of the parish. They worshipped at first in a chapel, built and occupied for a time by an unorganized society accustomed to the ritual of the Church of England. This building, which stood probably near the site of the new Court-House, was afterwards converted into a private dwelling.

In 1657 the Selectmen were empowered to build a new meeting-house, which was accordingly erected on "the rise of land a few paces to the southward of Pickering's Mill-Jam," near the location of the South school-house. In that edifice the society seemed to assume a more definite form. That was the acknowledged and only house of worship. In 1660, Mr. Joshua Moodey was by a formal vote of the town, appointed their minister. As yet, however, he was not ordained, nor was a church organized until the year 1671. In forming themselves into a church, the members first set apart a season for special prayer and fasting, to implore the guidance of the Lord in their enterprise. They then obtained the approbation of the General Court, and invited to the place a council of ministers and delegates from neighboring towns, by whom a church was organized, and Mr. Moodey was ordained pastor "in the presence of Gov. Leverett and several of the magistrates." The church covenant which was publicly subscribed on this occasion, is still preserved as it was written by the hand of the pastor. The following is a literal copy :—

Church Covenant adopted at the formation of the North Church, of Portsmouth, 1671.—"Wee doo this Day solemnly and publicly in ye presence of God and his people avouch the one only living and true God, Father, Son and Spirit, to be our God and his Word or revealed Will to be our Rule, and doo with ourselves give up our children to be the Lord's. Wee doo also professedly and heartily subject ourselves to Jesus X^t as ye Head of his church, and doo covenant and promise ye we will submit ourselves to ye Government of X^t in this particular church, according to ye laws of his House, that we will watch over our Brethren and be watcht over by y^e according to Rule and y^t we will in all things so demean ourselves towards our Pastor and fellow-members, as also towards all others as becomes ye Gospel, y^t ye Lord may dwell among us and bless us and we may be a peculiar people to his service and glory. And all this we promise by ye Help of Jesus Christ and in his Name, looking up to him for his Assistance, as being ourselves

capable of doing nothing." Subscribed by Joshua Moodey, John Cutt, Richard Cutt, Elias Stileman, Richard Martyn, Samuel Haines, James Pendleton, John Fletcher and John Tucker."

From this antique document, from reference to sermons preached just before the formation of the church, on the subject, from the fellowship of Mr. Moodey with the ministers of Massachusetts, and also from traditional evidence, it is well known what were the religious sentiments of the early members of this church. They were not the caricatures of Calvinism, which we have been so often and so unfairly charged with holding, but those sentiments which are embodied in the shorter catechism of the General Assembly of divines, or in the doctrinal articles of the Church of England. They are those sentiments which are discarded by some, at the present day, for creeds more indulgent, or more indistinct;—creeds developing less fully the evil, the consequences, and the remedy of sin.

Mr. Moodey was a graduate of Harvard College. The circumstance that he was invited to the Presidency of this Institution—an invitation which he modestly declined, is satisfactory evidence of his talents and scholarship. As a minister, he was zealous and faithful. For a series of years the church flourished under his pastoral care. At length, however, the connexion that had been so happily formed and preserved, was sundered by a transaction which illustrates the unbending integrity and faithfulness of the first pastor of this church.

The Lieut. Governor of the Province, (Mr. Cranfield,) suspected that the general influence of Mr. Moodey was the chief obstacle to the accomplishment of his own schemes of self-aggrandizement. Failing of success in his favorite plans, he resolved to inflict upon the unringing pastor some memorable marks of his unjustifiable resentment.

At this time an occurrence took place which served to excite in the bosom of the Lieut. Governor a more definite purpose of persecution. A vessel that had been seized by the Collector, was carried out of the harbour in the night. The owner of the vessel deposed that he knew nothing of the transaction. After-

wards, it appeared probable that he had perjured himself. The pastor of the church, finding that the credit of religion required an investigation, requested of the Governor, copies of the evidence, for the purpose of instituting an ecclesiastical examination. Mr. Cranfield ordered the minister to desist from his attempt, and threatened him with severe consequences in case of a refusal. Mr. Moodey was not to be thus intimidated. With admirable firmness he resolved to do his duty, at any hazard. After a sermon had been preached on the subject of false swearing, the offender was summoned to a trial before the church. The suspicion proved to have been well founded, and he publicly confessed the sin of perjury.

The Lieut. Governor soon devised a method by which to wreak his resentment upon the faithful minister. By a statute, then in force, or perhaps by an arbitrary construction of the statute, ministers were required to admit to the Lord's Supper all persons who should desire it who were "of suitable years and not vicious," according to the Liturgy of the Church of England. Cranfield gave notice to Mr. Moodey that he should expect on the following Sunday to partake thus of the sacrament. His demand was not granted. As a Congregational minister, Mr. Moodey was unauthorised to administer the Lord's Supper in this manner. To have complied with the request would have exposed him to a prosecution; for one of the statutes of that age enjoined "that no person shall presume to consecrate and administer the Lord's Supper before he be ordained a priest by Episcopal ordination, on pain of forfeiting for every offence one hundred pounds."

The Lieut. Governor gained his object. He now had the minister at his mercy. The oppressive statute was enforced, and the pastor was sentenced to six months imprisonment without bail. He was ordered into custody, without being allowed to take leave of his family; and, for thirteen weeks, was kept a prisoner. Upon the urgent solicitation of his friends, he was then released under a strict charge to preach no more in the Province on penalty of renewed imprisonment. Thus driven from his flock and exiled from the Province, he repaired to

Boston, upon an invitation from the "Old Church" of that city. For about nine years the bereaved church was destitute of a settled pastor. At the expiration of this period, Mr. Moodey by recommendation of an Ecclesiastical Council, accepted an invitation from the town to return to his former charge. He was welcomed back to Portsmouth with warm interest; and the connexion remained unbroken, between a faithful pastor and an affectionate flock until his death, which took place four years afterwards.

While Mr. Moodey was a resident of Boston, he evinced the enlargement and independence of his mind, by stemming the swollen tide of excitement which the subject of witchcraft had called forth. Unlike some of the ministers of the age, he declined giving any countenance to the severe measures which the popular will loudly demanded. His usefulness in Boston was seriously abridged by the anathemas, which his manly resistance to a popular and spreading delusion drew upon him. Chiefly by his moral courage, a gentleman and his wife who had been lodged in a jail in Boston, were saved from the cruel doom which the laws of those days awarded to persons suspected of witchcraft.

Cotton Mather has left on record a full testimony to his usefulness in life and to his happiness in death: "All the Churches in New-England considered him as a person, whom an eminency both in sense and grace had made considerable. The Church in Portsmouth (a part of the country that very much owed its life unto him!) *crys* out of a deadly wound in his death and is ready to cry out, Our breach is great like the sea: who can heal it? His labors in the gospel were frequent and fervent; whereof the press has given some lasting, as the pulpit gave many lively testimonies. Yea, if it were counted one of the most memorable things in St. Francis de Sales, that he made four thousand sermons to the people, I can relate as memorable a thing of our Moodey: before he died he had numbered some hundreds more than four thousand of them. And unto his cares to edify his flock by sermons, he added

more than ordinary cares to do it by visits : no man, perhaps, being a kinder visitant. He was not only ready to do good but also to suffer for doing it, and, as he was exemplarily zealous for a scriptural purity in the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, so he cheerfully submitted unto an imprisonment for that cause of God and of this country : wherein like Stephen, he had the honor to be the first that suffered in that way for that cause, in these parts of the world. Briefly : for piety, for charity and for faithfulness to the main interests of our churches, all that knew him and know the worth of these things wish that among the survivors he may have many followers." To a minister who visited him on his death bed, he declared,—" That he was rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God ; that he was longing to go to the precious Christ whom he had chose and served, that the spirit of Christ had comfortably taken away from him the fear of death. When that minister urged him to leave with him any special desire that he should judge proper to be mentioned, he said,—*The Life of the Churches—The Life of the Churches*, and the dying power of godliness in them. I beseech you to look after that." The minister at last said, " *The Lord Jesus Christ is now, sir, going to do for you as once for Joshua, (your name's sake !) He is just going to take from you your old, sorry, ragged garments, those of your flesh, and cloath you with change of raiment, with the garments of heavenly glory, and give you a place among his angels.*" Whereto he replied with some transport, " *I believe it ! I believe it !*" — Under Mr. Moodey's ministry, 197 members were added to the Church.

During the same month in which their pastor died, the town invited Mr. Nathaniel Rogers, son of John Rogers, President of Harvard College, to become their minister. Two years afterwards, in 1699, he was regularly ordained to the charge of the parish. Mr. Rogers, though often solicited, could not be induced to publish any of his sermons. His epitaph, a copy of which has been preserved by the timely care of President Stiles, speaks in high terms of his talents, learning and pastoral fidelity. It was his honor to trace back his ancestry to John Rogers, who

suffered martyrdom in the reign of Queen Mary, in defence of principles like those which this church has ever adopted.

The records of his ministry have been but partially preserved. It is impossible therefore to state with accuracy the results of his useful labors. He is said to have "inherited so much of the spirit and talents of his renowned ancestor, that his labours in this part of the vineyard were abundantly blessed by the great Head of the Church."

While Mr. Rogers was pastor of the church it was deemed necessary to erect a new Meeting-house. The growing extent of the town in a northern direction had made the old location inconveniently remote. The selection of a site for the contemplated building proved, as it has often done, a source of unhappy and permanent dissension. From this small fountain-head has flowed a stream of widening prejudice which has been, in the lapse of time, swollen by a variety of circumstances, and which now threatens to roll on, for generations to come, with undiminished force. The majority seem to have been in favor of removal to the spot where we now worship. The minority, while they would have approved a new location less remote from the old house, were strenuously opposed to this selection. They were so much displeased as to pass a vote at a tumultuous town-meeting—or rather after the meeting had been dissolved by the justices; "that the old Meeting-house built by the Town, about fifty-years ago, shall continue the Town Meeting-house forever: and when out of repair, so that it cannot be conveniently repaired, to build a new one on the place."

The new Meeting-house was opened for worship in January, 1713. The pastor, by a vote of the church, was desired to preach in the new house. This step induced the minority of the town to seek the settlement of a minister at the former place of worship. From that disaffected portion of the original society sprung the second, or South Parish. For many years the two parishes were united in doctrinal sentiments. Unhappily, however, a serious divergence on some essential points has since taken place.

When the house, within whose walls we are now assembled, was built, the Indians made frequent and sanguinary inroads upon the settlements of the Province. The peril of our ancestors may be estimated by the fact, as recorded by Belknap, that it was "impossible to empannel a jury some of whom had not suffered by the Indians either in their persons or families." When the new Meeting-house was erected on this spot it is said that, at the distance of about one hundred and fifty feet to the west, a row of palisades protected the town against the savages.

Upon the formation of the South Society, the North Parish, as it was afterwards named, ceased to enjoy the uncongenial protection of town patronage. Its business was no longer transacted in town meetings. The new house of worship remained, however, the place of meeting, at which the business of the town was for a long time transacted. For ten years afterwards, Mr. Rogers continued to discharge his duties, as pastor of the North Parish. His labors were closed by death in 1723.

The Rev. Jabez Fitch was the next pastor. He was a graduate of Harvard College. His superior attainments raised him to the rank of a Fellow and tutor of this Institution. The historian of New Hampshire acknowledges him as the contributor of valuable facts in aid of his design. He published a few sermons. Mr. Fitch discharged the duties of the ministry with fidelity and zeal for a period of twenty years. The imperfect state of the records of the church leaves us ignorant of the particular results of his labors. During his life an extraordinary revival of religion blessed the churches of New-England. The towns in this vicinity were not unvisited in this general effusion of the Holy Spirit. Portsmouth seems to have been pre-eminently favored.

Among the published accounts of the state of religion in this town, at the time to which I refer, no communication from the pastor of this church is to be found. Letters from other ministers, which were printed at the time, refer to a highly flourishing state of religion in Portsmouth. The pastor of a church in Newcastle mentions it, in giving a description of his own church, to which numerous additions were then made. The minister of

the South Parish, Mr. Shurtleff, published a full account of the state of religion in the town. His church, as well as our own, seemed to have participated largely in this work of grace.

In a letter dated 7th July, 1743, he states "that there has for some time past plainly appeared to be a remarkable revival of religion and a marvellous work of God's grace going on in Portsmouth, in New Hampshire." "That among the very many that have been awakened and deeply convinced there is a goodly number that are giving all the evidence that can be expected of a real and saving change."

In a previous communication, he enters more fully into detail. After giving a favorable description of the manners of the town, he speaks thus of its religious state :—" As to the generality of professors, they have seemed for a great while to content themselves with an empty form, and there has been but little of the life and power of religion to be seen." The improved state of religion which then followed, was attributed by Mr. Shurtleff to causes which are thus disclosed :—

"The great Earthquake in the year 1727, that put the whole country into such a surprise, was a means of awakening a great many here: and as to some there is reason to think the impressions have remained; but as to the bigger part it was not long before they fell into their former sleepy and secure state."

"Mr. Whitfield's coming among us, and also Mr. Tennent's, was, I am persuaded, blessed of God; and their preaching made instrumental of putting a great many upon shaking off their heavy slumbers."

"As there had been for some time a growing concern among us, as to things of a religious nature, and a remarkable work of God's grace going on in many parts of the land, the ministers of this and some other of the neighboring towns, agreed upon observing a monthly fast in our respective congregations to seek for the like blessing. When the solemnity was attended in this town, which was on Wednesday, Nov. 25, 1741, as soon as the afternoon service was ended, one cried out in a transport of joy, and others discovered a great deal of distress. The people did not care to disperse; insomuch that there was another sermon in

the evening, and a great number of them and some of the Ministers stayed till it was late, in the place of public worship. The next day a sermon was again preached in public and had an unusual efficacy upon the hearers. The day after, we had two or three exercises, and the congregation continued together till late at night." ... "Friday was the most remarkable day that was ever known among us. The whole congregation seemed deeply affected; and there was such a general outcry in some from a distressing sight of their sins and in others from a joyful sense of the love of Christ, that could not but put a great many in mind of the appearing of the Son of Man and of the different exclamations that shall be heard from the inhabitants of the world when they shall see Him coming in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory."

The special exercises in the South Meeting House were cheerfully maintained for a number of days. "We had preaching for some time upon every day," says Mr. Shurtleff. To a Minister of Boston, he writes afterwards,—"As you were called upon to minister in public almost every evening during your near three weeks stay among us, you can't but see reason to acknowledge to the glory of God's grace, that he was pleased to own and bless your ministry." It was chiefly by such uncommon exertions that the revival in this town was promoted.

The results seem to have been such as attend pure revivals of religion in our own day. "It was very affecting," says the writer, "to be called into one family after another, as I was going along the street, and entreated not to leave them till prayer had been solemnly offered up to God on their behalf. A divine power was then so plainly to be seen in what had come to pass among us, that there was hardly any that dare openly and expressly deny it."

"As to the place in general, that there is an alteration in it for the better, must I think needs be owned by every unprejudiced observer. That there is not that profane cursing and swearing which has formerly been used, has been acknowledged by some who are far from being well affected to the present times. That the sabbath is more strictly observed is out of all manner of

dispute. Family worship, where it was neglected, in a variety of instances, is now set up. Some that were manifestly of a narrow, selfish and worldly spirit, and seemed unwilling to part with any thing of what they possessed to any good and charitable use whatsoever, appear now to have their hearts much enlarged, and are ready to distribute of their substance, as the honour of God and the wants of their fellow christians have called for it. Many that have dealt dishonestly have not only acknowledged the wrongs they have done, but made restitution for them. Music and dancing seems to be wholly laid aside. Where you might formerly have heard jovial, and it may be profane and obscene songs, you may now hear psalms and hymns of praise sung to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ."

This improved state of religion, like modern revivals, did not fail to excite the censures of the evil-minded. The converts were charged with "pride and vanity." The friends of religion were said to be uncharitable and censorious. "Every one," said Mr. Shurtleff, "is cried out upon as uncharitable by some, who do not look upon all to be good christians, and in a safe estate, that profess to believe the gospel, let their particular belief and practice be almost what it will. Especially, for any to declare that an external conformity to it, is not sufficient to bring a man to heaven ; to declare that men's blameless lives and good morals will not save them ; that they may go a great way and do a great many duties in religion, and yet be but almost christians, and finally miscarry ; that what they do in religion must spring from a vital principle within ; that they must be born of God and be partakers of his image in this world, or they are unfit for communion with him, and must necessarily fall short of happiness in another world ; this is condemned by some as rash judging, and thought to be nothing better than enthusiastic madness—*whereas they are the words of truth and soberness.*"

It seems too, that conversions led to alienations among relatives, and sometimes to serious dissensions in the family circle." "But then," asks Mr. Shurtleff, "is this any thing more than must have been expected, supposing the work to be from God?" And he adds,—"though this work, through the corruptions of

men, may have accidentally been the occasion of dissension as to some, what a sweet and agreeable harmony, has it, from its own native tendency, produced among others? I have known of long and seemingly deep antipathies that have been at once laid aside."

I shall add but one extract more from these valuable letters : " We have had many sweet and delightful sabbaths, and the blessed Jesus has richly feasted many of his dear disciples at sundry of our monthly communions."

It is a happy circumstance, that we are favored with such a minute and satisfactory account of this remarkable revival of religion from the pen, not of one of our own pastors, but of Mr. Shurtleff. It is interesting to know that the South Church seemed to share so largely and with so much satisfaction in this work of grace. Sincerely do we desire that upon that church the influences of the Holy Spirit may be shed down again with equal fullness and with the same happy results; that she may return to her ancient belief and ancient practice, and that the North and South churches may differ only in name, while they concur cordially, as they once did, in promoting by the same means the salvation of their fellow men.

Thus it appears that nearly a century ago, this town was the scene of unusual and deep religious impressions. To this period may we refer the current tradition, that, for an entire week, business was generally laid aside, while the inhabitants thronged to the houses of worship under the impulse of engrossing anxiety for the salvation of the soul.

Two years before the close of Mr. Fitch's life, the North Parish invited Mr. Samuel Langdon to the office of assistant minister. Mr. Langdon had identified his name with the expedition against Louisburg, by having been present as chaplain of a regiment at the capture of that town. In the year 1747. he succeeded Mr. Fitch, and was ordained pastor of the church.

He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen, in Scotland. On the formation of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he became a member. " Extensive knowledge, hospitality, patriotism, and

piety," have been mentioned as his prominent characteristics. From his earliest years he was an indefatigable student. The promise of his youthful scholarship was fulfilled in the attainments of his maturer age. The Piscataqua Association of ministers, consisting then of twenty-five members, holding a high rank as a body of learned and useful men, regarded Dr. Langdon as the most eminent of their number.

Among the numerous publications from his pen, a Thanksgiving Sermon, preached in his own parish, in 1759, has been pronounced "one of the best occasional discourses extant." An invitation from Harvard College to fill the presidency of that institution, deprived the church of his valuable labors, after he had filled the pastoral office for twenty-seven years. The separation was greatly regretted by his attached congregation. The records of his ministry have been lost.

While Dr. Langdon was pastor of the church, the town of Portsmouth was favored with a final visit from the celebrated Whitfield. I could not concur with those who have termed this devoted man a "firebrand of discord," unless I could give a similar title to the apostle Paul. Whitfield was not infallible. In some things he unquestionably erred, yet his failings were perhaps as few as those of the best uninspired man. His usefulness and success as a preacher have not been surpassed in modern times.

An aged and intelligent lady, who heard him preach in her youth, has favored me with some information respecting this extraordinary man, which I will here mention. His manner in the pulpit was at times impressive and majestic beyond description. There was an almost unearthly power in his glowing appeals. Well did the narrator recollect, that at the mere reading of a psalm, when he commenced the labors of his last visit, an aspect of unusual seriousness was spread over the whole assembly. The houses of worship were sometimes so crowded that it was necessary to find entrance for him to the pulpit by a ladder reaching to the window from without. The impression made by his sermons was indescribable. He bore the crowded auditory along in flights of eloquence to which scarcely any other man

could soar. Sometimes his illustrations, surprising the hearers by their exact pictures of human life, would call forth a smile; but the skilful preacher, having gained his object in fixing the attention, would pass to the most solemn and powerful delineations of divine truth. The hearers were held in breathless attention while he portrayed the glories of heaven and the woes of hell. Those who "came to scoff, remained to pray." All classes felt the animating spell of his apostolic zeal. The aged and the young thronged around him with equal admiration. By the poor, whom he loved to seek out in the apartments of the almshouse, and the hovel of want, he was welcomed as a bountiful benefactor. The affluent vied with each other for the privilege of entertaining the distinguished preacher. And, though he merged not the faithful exhorter in the polished and agreeable guest, while he enjoyed their hospitality, the society of Whitfield was universally sought. Nor were the effects of his preaching slight and transient. Here, as in other places, many were converted by his labors. The churches felt, for months and years, the influence of his visits. They left long behind a heavenly fragrance. They gave a new impulse to the friends of religion: Christians were raised by his inspiring example and his glowing appeals to a permanent standard of higher usefulness.

It was the privilege of Portsmouth to enjoy the labors of this eminent man at a time, when the nearness of his departure from earth gave an additional value to his ministry. The very light of heaven was shedding its beams upon him during his final visit to this town. The last week he spent on earth, he preached four times in Portsmouth. Once only, after his departure, did he preach again. The last time but one, that he addressed an audience, he preached, it is believed, on this spot. From Portsmouth he went to Exeter. Here the people assembled in such throngs that it was necessary to preach in the open air. Before commencing the service, a friend said to Whitfield,— "Sir you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." His reply was,— "True Sir," and turning aside, he clasped his hands together and exclaimed, looking upwards,— "Lord Jesus, I am

weary in thy work, but not of thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for thee once more in the fields, seal the truth, and come home and die." Nor was his prayer unheard. He travelled the same day to Newburyport, where, before the expiration of twenty-four hours, he was called away by death from his earthly labors.*

The inhabitants of this town declared how deeply they mourned his loss, by tolling the bells on the day of his funeral, from 11 o'clock until near sunset—a mark of deserved respect, seldom, if ever, except in this instance, shewn to a clerical visitor.

During the interval that elapsed between the death of Dr. Langdon and the ordination of his successor, the North Parish enjoyed, for one year, the services of Dr. Ezra Stiles. Driven from his flock at Newport by the invasion of British troops, he consented to supply this church. He had been invited to accept the Presidency of Yale College;—this invitation he at length accepted, although urged by the North Parish to become their pastor. Dr. Stiles was one of the most eminent scholars of the age. He was honored with the title of D. D. from the University of Edinburgh. He was elected a member of several learned societies in Europe, and held correspondence with the most distinguished men in the literary world.

In the year 1779, the Rev. Joseph Buckminster was ordained pastor of this church. I am relieved of the pleasing task of mentioning to this assembly with what ability and reputation he discharged the duties of the pastoral office. Though dead, he yet speaketh by the printed sermons, to which some of you listened as they fell from his lips; and his memory lives in the hearts of surviving relatives and attached parishioners. He was pastor of the church for thirty-three years.

During the life of Dr. Buckminster, the town was visited by President Washington in his tour through New England. It has

*The following is an extract from a letter addressed by Whitfield to a friend in London, dated Portsmouth, N. H. Sept. 23d, 1770—8 days before his death.

"_____, You will see by the many invitations what a door is opened for preaching the everlasting Gospel. I was so ill on Friday that I could not preach, though thousands were waiting to hear. Well! the day of release will shortly come; but it does not seem yet; for by riding sixty miles I am better and hope to preach here to-morrow."

been mentioned as an interesting circumstance, that he worshipped a part of the Sabbath in the sanctuary which has here been repaired. Some remember the spot where he stood and the unaffected air of seriousness with which "the Father of his Country" joined with the worshipping assembly in their addresses to the Throne of Grace. The circumstance may be worth mentioning. We hope, however, that the edifice has been often honored with the presence of one greater than Washington—the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Under the ministry of Dr. Buckminster, seventy-six persons were admitted to the church.

In the year 1815, the Rev. Israel W. Putnam was ordained over this parish as the sixth pastor. Of his very recent labors it is needless to give a history. His memory is cherished, and his pastoral fidelity is remembered with affection and gratitude. During the twenty years of his ministry, three hundred and one members were added to the Church, a larger number than have been admitted during a similar period in any preceding ministry.

We are brought now to the present times. I shall only add to this sketch, that the speaker, who is the seventh pastor, was installed on the 5th of October, 1836.*

In conclusion, let me request your continued attention, which has been already tasked by the annals of our parochial history, to some appropriate

REFLECTIONS.

Feelings of mingled pleasure and pain are awakened by the retrospect.

I. The review of the history of this parish should call forth *pleasing emotions of gratitude to God.* Various considerations demand from us grateful acknowledgment.

*On the 16th day of September, 1828, forty members were detached from the North Church, to constitute the Pleasant-St. Church. For eight years the new society maintained its existence. During this period it enjoyed the pastoral labors of three able ministers, in succession: the Rev. Jared B. Waterbury, now of Hudson, N.Y.; the Rev. Joseph H. Towne, now of Boston; and the Rev. Parsons Cooke, now of Lynn, Mass. Removals from the town, and other unexpected circumstances, tended to thwart the enterprise; and on the first day of July, 1836, the Pleasant St. Church, consisting of forty-nine members, was dissolved by the re-admission of its members into the North Church.

1. The dissolution of the ties, that bound together civil and ecclesiastical proceedings in former days, should awaken our gratitude.

Before this church could be organized, application had to be made to the civil authorities for leave to form such an association. When it was organized, the Governor of the Province and several magistrates were present.

The early inhabitants of a neighboring town were less fortunate. When an attempt was made at Exeter to form a church and settle a minister, in the year 1644, the General Court interposed, and issued a solemn prohibition, on the ground that the people were not in a sufficiently peaceable state among themselves to proceed to such a step. They were ordered to wait—"to defer gathering a church," until there was sufficient evidence of entire harmony, to satisfy the Court.

In those times no man could vote in a town-meeting, or sit as deputy in the General Court, unless he were a church member. When the jurisdiction of Massachusetts was first extended over Portsmouth, this law was in force here. It was soon dispensed with, however, by a decision of the Court, as far as the towns of New Hampshire were concerned. The business of this parish was done in town-meetings for many years,

These modes of union between church and state no longer exist. If a few men wish to organize themselves into a church of Christ now, it is not necessary to obtain a vote of the State Legislature. Nor does that body deviate so far from its proper sphere as to say when a church shall settle a minister, and when not. Nor is the business of this parish now done in town-meetings.

It was the mistaken notion of the early settlers of New England, that the church needed a fostering embrace from the state. They had not divested themselves of all the erroneous conceptions with which Papal influence had encumbered Christianity, in their father-land. They renounced indeed nearly all of the corruptions which soiled the purity of religion in the land of their nativity. They left behind usages which had pressed like an

incubus upon the Redeemer's cause. They succeeded in ridding themselves almost entirely of the seeds of evil which had produced a rank harvest of corruptions on the other side of the ocean. If some straggling seeds of this character were accidentally brought over by them, in the drapery of their new institutions, let us not condemn them unsparingly. The weeds which were thus produced in the new inheritance, were eradicated by their own hand.

If they were so unwise as to vary from the Saviour's principle, "my kingdom is not of this world"—and unite church and state in an uncongenial alliance, they were wise enough to correct the evil as soon as its mischievous character was ascertained.

While we discern the errors of our Puritan forefathers, it would ill become us—nay, it would be filial impiety, to brand their name with obloquy because they did not live in the light of the nineteenth century. When we shall have proved to the world that we can lay a broader and firmer foundation for the superstructure of social happiness and political prosperity, than the Pilgrims have here laid, we may be worthy to sit in judgment upon their failings.

2. The review of the past calls on us to regard with gratitude the continued existence of this parish.

To feel the force of this reflection it is necessary to advert to the character of our principles, and to the circumstances under which they have been planted and reared.

It has ever been the lot of this society to belong to that sect which is "every where spoken against." Our doctrines are those of the Pilgrim-Fathers of New England.

Under what circumstances were these principles avowed by the founders of this church? Was the early character of the town eminently religious, or the reverse? Was the soil, in which these principles were planted, suited to their growth or not?

On this point I have found contradictory statements. The author of the "Annals of Portsmouth" asserts that the people at this early period were "not puritanical in their religious sentiments," and that "Gov. Winthrop says, some of them were professed enemies to the way of our churches."

The same writer is accountable for the authenticity of a well known story to this effect :

" A minister from the province of Massachusetts, while preaching in this town, enlarged upon the depravity of the times. To make his appeal the more successful he charged his auditors with defection from the principles of the Pilgrims, who sought in this new wilderness the exercise of the rights of conscience and the advancement of religion. He was interrupted by one of the congregation, who said, ' Sir, you entirely mistake the matter; our ancestors did not come here on account of their religion, but to fish and trade.' "

The fact, that the towns of New Hampshire were dispensed from the operation of the law, requiring admission to the church as a qualification for citizenship, would indicate that religion had fewer friends in this province than in Massachusetts ; for, in the latter province this unwise regulation could be enforced.

Moreover, the formation of a church was not one of the first proceedings of this town, as it was in some of the towns of the adjoining province. Here, no church was organized for more than thirty years after a regular form of town government was adopted, and more than forty years after the first settlement.

In the province of Massachusetts the formation of churches was not thus deferred. Only eight years after the arrival of the first settlers, £400 were granted by the General Court, to found Harvard College. This was not done however, till after the establishment of religious institutions—as we may learn by the following statement from one of the emigrants :— " After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship and settled the civil government ; one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall be in the dust." In other settlements, it seems then, churches were organized and religious in-

stitutions established within eight years after their commencement. Here forty years elapsed before a church was organized.

Such are some of the evidences that the early state of the town did not favor greatly the growth of strict religious principles. On the other hand, there are evidences of a better state of feeling.

When New Hampshire was erected into a separate province, in 1680, and the first General Assembly was about to be elected, a public fast was observed to ask the divine blessing on the approaching session, and "the continuance of their precious and pleasant things."

It is stated by Alden, in his history of the religious societies of Portsmouth, that in the early years of this town, "women used frequently to walk from Greenland to Portsmouth, to attend public worship,"—a fact that denotes no ordinary interest in religion. From the same source is taken the following account of the success of a minister, who preached for a few months before a pastor was settled in this town. "It pleased God to give great success to his labors, so as above forty of them, whereof the most had been very profane, and some of them professed enemies to the way of our churches, wrote to the magistrates and elders acknowledging the sinful course they had lived in, and bewailing the same, and blessing God for calling them out of it." It seems however, that most of them relapsed from this hopeful state. Still the fact, that such an impression could be made upon our early population by the labors of a faithful minister, should be set off against the facts of a different description, which have been already mentioned.

Harvard College was founded by the Pilgrim Fathers, chiefly for the purpose of rearing up a ministry who should sympathize with them in religious principles, and teach those principles with suitable ability to their descendants. It was "established expressly 'for Christ and his Church.'" To this institution, designed for such a purpose by the Puritan settlers of New England, a liberal sum was subscribed by this town. In the year 1669, the inhabitants engaged to pay £60 a year, for seven years, for the benefit of the Institution.

If an object like this could obtain such ample patronage in the infancy of the town, a general respect, at least, for religious institutions, must have prevailed.

From a review and comparison of these facts, we are reluctantly constrained to believe that the early character of this town was not of a decidedly religious stamp. The infancy of our church was not cherished by the fond endearments of a devout community. The tender plant was exposed to the unfriendly blasts of prejudice. If it has since gained any vigor, it has been under an atmosphere at least not very congenial to its nature.

It is not to be supposed that the friends of Orthodoxy, as our creed has been unhappily designated, have always been as exemplary as their principles require. Still, their foibles, nay their worst delinquencies, scarcely furnish sufficient cause for the disfavor, with which our sentiments have been received. The extreme vigilance with which our failings are pointed out, and the unsparing severity with which our proceedings are often condemned, can be accounted for only by the character of our principles. If we did not avow the humbling doctrines of evangelical faith; or if, having avowed, we made no attempt to exemplify them, we might avoid many of the reproaches which it is our lot to bear. The practical enforcement of our doctrines in a life of active piety is a rock of offence, which the broad tide of human depravity will not usually pass without the sullen roar of resistance.

There have indeed been seasons, when the clouds of prejudice which have hung over our church have broken asunder, and let down for a shorter or a longer period, the gleams of public favor. There have been periods, when this parish seemed destined to enjoy a palmy state of rare prosperity. For many years it was the only parish in the town; and at a later date, it has, for a time at least, held a rank second to none in wealth and influence. This rank it might, perhaps, still have held; indeed it may have risen to a metropolitan pre-eminence among the parishes of the place, if it had indulgently relaxed the strictness of its principles.

This course, however, the church has wisely declined. It has been deemed essential to her spiritual, if not her temporal welfare, to adhere to "the faith once delivered to the saints."

- We deem it a suitable topic of thankfulness that this church has held fast the profession of her faith without wavering. Temptations, diversified and pressing, have thronged around her. She has been flattered with the bright prospect of courtly favor on the one hand, and terrified with the loud anathemas of public dislike on the other. Her principles, however, have not been shaken. She has chosen with admirable steadfastness, to "suffer affliction with the people of God," rather than reap the rewards of popular favor by relinquishing the doctrines of the Pilgrim-Fathers. The wonder is, not that the cause of Orthodox Christianity has failed of gaining a towering supremacy in this town, but that it has still retained its existence. The congregation has outlived shocks and reverses that would have proved fatal to any cause, not based upon the foundations of Scriptural truth.

There must have been, in the bosom of this parish a centrifugal force of singular power, or out of it attractive influences of no ordinary rank; for particles, and sometimes not the smallest particles, have been flying off almost in every direction. From this reservoir have been drawn supplies that have contributed greatly to the strength of other parishes. But, though the drain has been excessive, the effect has not been fatal. The Lord has preserved in existence the original fountain. Like the widow's cruise, its contents have been yielded up freely, and it is not yet empty.

And if, at any future period, the temptation to swerve from the established principles of the church should shake the steadfastness of some, we doubt not that men will be found, whose firmness will reclaim the wavering, as effectually as the resolution of Pompey stopped his soldiers, when a panic had spread dismay in their ranks. He threw his own body across the only passage by which they could escape, and told them, if they would flee, they must trample upon their beloved commander.

3. Gratitude is demanded also, for the kindness of God to this church, in having kept up a succession of pastors who have deserved well the confidence of the public.

The ministers of this church have been men of no ordinary abilities. Few congregations have been favored with a succession of pastors who have held a rank so deservedly high, as men of talents. One of them filled the Presidential chair of Harvard College. Another, when solicited to accept this office, declined. Dr. Stiles, who supplied the parish for a season, when solicited to settle here permanently, declined, for the purpose of accepting the Presidency of Yale College.

But the literary qualifications of a minister of the Gospel are far from being his crowning excellence. Where piety is wanting, talents and learning, though of the highest order, may be but the brightness of a whitened sepulchre, or the unfertilizing brilliancy of a wintry sun. If not "led by the Spirit of God" we are but blind leaders of the blind. The pastors of this church have been, without exception, godly and faithful men. If we contrast our history with that of sister churches in adjoining towns—churches that have dwindled into insignificance, or become extinct in consequence of the immorality of ministers, we shall feel to-day the binding obligation to thank God, that the ordinances of this church have not been dispensed by the hands of ungodly pastors.

4. The circumstances, under which we meet, point us to another claim for gratitude in the completion of repairs, which furnish to this congregation a remodeled house of worship.

The venerable edifice within whose walls your fathers worshipped—the cherished object around which their most sacred associations have clustered—which has been the house of prayer for four generations—which has escaped so remarkably the casualties of storm and fire—which has resounded so often with the voice of supplication and of praise—within which so many of the servants of God have announced the messages of heaven; this hallowed structure was not doomed to be the deserted fold of a scattered flock. It was not its fate to stand in ruins, until

the storm should find entrance at its own will, into the forsaken sanctuary, and the rude blast should move at its option the unclosed doors, and the rains of heaven stream through a perforated roof. It was not doomed to moulder away until the altar of God should be defiled by the unchecked intrusion of man and beast, till the tottering frame and the falling spire should relate to the wayfarer the mournful tale, that one of the most ancient churches in the State has been disbanded and its sentiments rejected. No such gloomy spectacle unfolds itself to our view.

The sanctuary, in which for more than a hundred years the truths of Christianity have been distinctly and faithfully taught, has experienced, not the mouldering touch of ruin, but the renovating power of mechanical art. It has thrown off the obsolete appendages of its former existence. It has emerged now, like the insect from its chrysalis state, transformed into shapes of beauty which discover scarcely a trace of its preceding condition. Dilapidation has taken place, but it was the dilapidation which precedes the renewing work of modern skill.

We may thank God, to-day, that he has inclined the patrons of this enterprise to render a service of such seasonable value to his cause. ~~May their~~ public spirit and zeal reap a rich reward. May the blessing of Him who has been honored by their undertaking, descend upon them and their families ! May they receive a hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come, life everlasting !

II. The review of the past may inspire also *mournful reflections.*

More than a century ago, the house, within whose walls we are now assembled, was frequented by a throng of worshippers. What were the scenes which yonder sun witnessed at that time ? Pass back in imagination through three generations,—what do you behold ? The aged come, with tottering limbs to their new house of worship. Children with elastic step and buoyant heart, cross the threshhold of the sanctuary. The thoughtful matron and the busy man, the sanguine youth and the blushing maiden,

sit together in their pews and listen to the well-known accents of the pastor's voice. The swell of sacred music rises from the assembly. Listen to that plaintive strain,—its magic spell moistens the eye of sensibility. And now the more animating power of stirring notes kindles fresh rapture in the hearts of the devout. Worshippers of every age stand on this spot in fixed attention and in solemn stillness, and send up, with their pastor's supplianting voice, the various wishes of their own burdened hearts. Observe the breathless interest with which they hearken to the warnings of Jehovah. Mark the falling tear that has been drawn from its fountain by the recital of a Saviour's love. See with what power the Gospel subdues the obduracy of the proud transgressor, and awakens reflection from the most heedless mind. Observe too the marks of joy with which the new-born convert drinks in the sincere milk of the word. The drapery of woe, in which mourning families are clad, shows that the sanctuary is prized as the refuge of the bereaved. Their afflictions call forth the sympathy and the prayers of the congregation. The brighter faces and the more cheerful attire of the bridal party denote that the newly married pair respect the institutions of religion. The rites of Christianity are administered. Believers dedicate their offspring to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, at the baptismal font. The sacramental board is spread, and the disciples of Christ come out from the rest of the congregation, to commemorate the death of their beloved Master.

Were these scenes actually witnessed upon this consecrated spot more than one hundred years ago? Where now is the assembly that then filled the house of prayer? Where are they, whose bosom beat as high with hope and joy, as yours do now—whose countenances were fair and animated as any in this house—whose brows were knit by the workings of a mind as busy as your own—whose limbs moved with as much elasticity and grace as yours? Where now are the people that sat beneath this roof and listened with serious attention to the preacher's voice?—Minister and people were long since numbered with the dead,

What share have they in the regards of the present generation? Tradition has preserved only a faint remembrance of their names. They are unheeded by the men who tread the streets which they once trod. Who thinks of the forgotten dead, once as active and useful inhabitants of this town as yourselves?

This generation also must pass away. The houses you occupy must descend to owners now unborn. These streets will be trodden by men who will think no more of us, than we do of the first settlers of the town. This house of worship will be the resort of another generation. Pastors, whose faces you and I shall never see, will successively occupy this pulpit and descend to the grave. Assemblies, of which none of the present audience shall compose a part, will fill this temple. An unborn generation will look back upon this day with the same unsatisfied curiosity with which we speculate upon the first day of worship spent by a buried generation, upon this spot. Where then will this throng of immortal spirits exist? Who of this number will rank then among the ransomed servants of the Holy One? Who will wail with the unpardoned and irreclaimable in the abodes of eternal despair?

The foundation of this temple was laid, and its spire reared, by men who have long since entered the world of spirits. Their work was the fruit of much and engrossing reflection. It was completed with laborious toil. The edifice which was provided by their exertions—which was finished in the most approved style of the times—which has been the cherished house of prayer for four generations, has felt the wasting power of age. Long since the builders have slumbered with the dead. Their work has survived them more than a century, but at last, it has needed the repairs and improvements of modern times.

This house has been remodeled by the exertions of many of this people. The enterprise has engrossed your thoughts;—it has been undertaken under great disadvantages, with self denial and with prayer. This structure, rescued from decay by your timely exertions, will be cherished by ensuing generations as the

dwelling place of their Father's God. Ultimately however, the slow and sure ravages of time must efface every vestige of its present beauty. The style of our age may be a weariness to those who shall worship in this house in the days of its future decrepitude and decay. And the work which you have reared with such well expended care, will be demolished to make way for a structure, in comparison with which, this will seem covered with the blemishes and deformities of an antiquated age.

Thus the fashion of the world passeth away. The edifice and its builders will at length be forgotten. The course of time will sweep onward. The revolutions of our globe will complete their round :—

“The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind.”

Blessed, thrice blessed are they, who shall rise from this “wreck of matter and crush of worlds,” to stand among “the spirits of just men made perfect,” and celebrate, in the courts of heaven, the praises of Redeeming Love!—AMEN.

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